

Received 3/10/04

Good morning Michael:

Your requests to both Manitoba academics and government officials concerning further details about the zebra mussel siting in Manitoba posted by the U.S.G.S. were re-directed to me for response. It is my Section that has responsibility for implementing Manitoba's zebra mussel and some of our other ANS programs and both I and my staff were involved in responding to the issue in 1999.

First, I need to provide some background. Beginning around 1990, we recognized that zebra mussels had the potential to quickly move out of the Great Lakes, cross watershed boundaries, and potentially invade waters of the Hudson Bay basin. We began a very aggressive education campaign linked to preventative programs, largely aimed at the boating public since boaters were thought to be the most likely vector to accidentally transport zebra mussels into Manitoba waters. In addition, we have been working with industries and water facilities that could be affected by zebra mussels to ensure a high state of readiness. As well, we have in place a relatively large monitoring network to provide early warning to us should zebra mussels become established in the province.

On June 30, 1999, a large boat was brought to the Royal Winnipeg Yacht Club in Winnipeg, Manitoba by trailer. The boat had been purchased in Orillia, Ontario (located within the St. Lawrence drainage basin) and had been trailered directly from Orillia to Winnipeg. Because of the successful education program that we had in place, a very alert marina worker recognized zebra mussels attached to the boat and contacted environment and natural resource officials before the boat could be launched in the Red River. Although the new owner of the boat was cooperative, a stop order was immediately issued until the boat could be thoroughly inspected. While adult zebra mussels were found attached to the boat, none were alive. Samples were collected of bilge water, etc., and no veligers were detected. A subsequent order under the Environment Act was issued that required the boat to be thoroughly cleaned, under our supervision, before it could be launched. I was on-site to supervise the cleaning process.

In summary, our efforts to put in place proactive zebra mussel education programs were extremely effective. This program, combined with responsible marina operators and boat owners, lead to the early identification of zebra mussels on this boat brought into Manitoba from the Great Lakes area. Prompt regulatory action then prevented the boat from being launched until it could be properly inspected and cleaned. No veligers were found and all adult zebra mussels attached to the boat were dead.

For your information, I have also included a photograph of the boat along with one of my staff involved in the inspection.

Please give me a call should you require further information.

Dwight

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